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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 003037

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LEADER KASPAROV OPTIMISTICALLY PREDICTS  
INEVITABLE CHAOS IN RUSSIA

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Beyrle for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a December 11 meeting with Ambassador Beyrle, opposition leader Garry Kasparov gave an upbeat assessment of how his Solidarity political movement is positioned to exploit the "inevitable chaos" that will arise from the current government's course. He argued that authoritarian trends have increased under Medvedev, whose drive for economic reform Kasparov sees as a plan to redistribute political authority and shift resources away from Putin loyalists. On a broader scale, China has replaced the United States as prime threat to Russia, while the concept European integration is becoming a popular counterbalance to China's perceived interest in acquiring territory in the Far East. Kasparov went on to lament that a list of all USAID programming in Russia was not posted on the Embassy website. End Summary.

#### The Future of Solidarity

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¶2. (C) United Civil Front Chairman and Solidarity Co-Chairman Garry Kasparov argued to the Ambassador December 11 that Solidarity was the first and only unified liberal organization in Russia, connecting the business right to the social democrats on the left. The movement is building a structure across Russia which has a unique unified appeal. The movement is preparing for the "inevitable chaos" that will result from the present government's course. When the Ambassador inquired whether this process amounted to the creation of a democratic reserve for a time when political space exists for a real opposition, Kasparov went a step further. In his view, Solidarity is emulating a Bolshevik model -- organizing to fill a power vacuum. Solidarity is an ideological coalition formed -- in contrast to other opposition movements -- absent of influence or manipulation from the government. Kasparov envisions Solidarity eventually splitting into three or more political parties when the movement makes a transition into elected government.

#### Attacking Luzhkov makes Strange Bedfellows

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¶3. (C) Solidarity Co-Chairman Boris Nemtsov has led the charge against Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, most recently with his investigative presentation "Luzhkov: Itogi (Results)." (Note: Multiple contacts within Solidarity report the movement falls into two camps, under Kasparov and Nemtsov, and that there is noticeable tension between them. In describing Nemtsov, however, Kasparov gave no indication of any tension -- he was completely positive and laudatory. End Note.) While Luzhkov sued Nemtsov for libel and won, the judge threw out all but one complaint. Solidarity considered this a major victory, as five other allegations of corruption were not considered libel. According to Kasparov, Nemtsov has been working closely with LDPR's Zhirinovskiy to coordinate attacks on Luzhkov. In response to an inquiry

from the Ambassador about how long Luzhkov had left in power, Kasparov responded that, while he believes Luzhkov is widely disliked, there is no one to replace him. The federal government will not risk losing control of the streets of Moscow and, for all his faults, Luzhkov maintains stability. There may be growing support in the Kremlin to retain Luzhkov as mayor in a severely weakened form, Kasparov alleged.

#### Infrastructure and Corruption

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14. (C) Kasparov is not convinced that the Nevsky Express train derailment was a terrorist attack and listed conspiracy theories, which point to a cover-up aimed at hiding a more shocking truth -- that Soviet-era infrastructure is collapsing rapidly. The clear corruption of local government, which enabled the club fire in Perm days later, forced Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to take the unprecedented step of firing members of the local government.

In Kasparov's view, these incidents will only become more frequent as the corruption of the government prevents effective responses to the inevitable decay of infrastructure.

#### Modernization as a Fight over Spending

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15. (C) While some commentators see President Dmitriy Medvedev's call for modernization as a solution to the decaying infrastructure of the last century, Kasparov stressed that the Russian government has grown distinctly more authoritarian under Medvedev over that last two years.

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Instead, he sees modernization as an attempt by Medvedev to increase his influence within the Kremlin. Modernization programs will transfer significant federal funds from Putin loyalists within the bureaucracy into the hands of Medvedev supporters. Modernization is a tool for redistribution of political authority, not to improve economic performance and quality of life.

#### Putinism without Putin

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16. (C) Kasparov went on to argue that many decision makers in Moscow are losing patience with Putin. His tight control of the levers of power, and the stability he creates, are well respected. His tendency to hand out money to his friends and political excesses of his rule, for instance the spectacle of the Khodorkovsky trial, have caused tension. A growing cohort of Medvedev supporters want "Putinism with a human face," a more pragmatic continuation of managed democracy. While the budget is still very much under Putin's control, Kasparov observed that Vladislav Surkov remains extremely influential as First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, and he appears to have positioned himself firmly behind Medvedev. Kasparov believes that with a week of bad press the Russian people would turn their back on Putin and, conversely, with the right public relations support, Medvedev could take control of the government.

#### Clash of Civilizations: Russian Geostrategy

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17. (C) Kasparov characterized Russian views toward America as shifting from an enemy to a meddling secondary actor. China has replaced the United States as the threat to Russian territorial integrity; there is a growing belief, he said, that China could take up to 50 percent of Russian territory in the next ten to twenty years. Kasparov also suggested a "peaceful divorce" of the Caucasus in response to the threat of Islamic radicalism. When the Ambassador countered that cutting the region out of Russia would almost certainly create a greater threat, and the Russian government would be

better off trying to address the short and long-term causes of instability there, Kasparov responded that many Russians no longer want to pay the high costs associated with such efforts. The average Russian citizen is tired of the problem, sees no hope of improvement, and wants it to simply go away.

¶18. (C) Europe, in contrast, is increasingly seen as friendly by Russia. Strong relations with Europe counter-balance China's claims to Russian territory, and for this reason even nationalist groups are beginning to support the idea of integration. The Ambassador stressed that a prime American goal was to convince Russia that the U.S. has a genuine interest in a strong, prosperous Russia. Kasparov responded that China's recent softening of rhetoric against Taiwan was seen as a conscious decision to both appease the U.S. and focus efforts on exploiting the Russian Far East. Kasparov described this emerging Russian world view as "Europe: Positive, America: Negative, China: Enemy."

USAID

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¶19. (C) Kasparov expressed frustration that USAID funding decision-making was not more transparent, saying that the US government spends approximately 67 million dollars in Russia annually, though only five million dollars are accounted for in the USAID website. (Note: The USAID Russia Mission's public website does include specific dollar amount allocations by program type. End Note.) He suggested a greater focus on peer-to-peer projects, which would bring Russians to America for training. Focusing on trade union and veterans' organization cooperation, he argued, would help to protect USAID programming from government propaganda attacks.

Comment

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¶10. (C) Kasparov paints a gloomy picture of Russia's future, but one that validates the Solidarity movement's goals. Without the "inevitable chaos" which he predicts will swallow the present regime, it is difficult to imagine a scenario in which Solidarity's present leadership rises to power. It is an inconvenient truth that the movement has negligible traction with the average voter outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Kasparov's assessment of the Putin-Medvedev

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tandem, as a government trying both to deal with the problems presently facing Russia and to position themselves to remain in control of the country, reflects a growing consensus in other parts of the Russian elite as well.  
Beyrle